

WYCOMBE WANDERERS are likely to go into tomorrow's (Saturday) opening Rothmans Isthmian League fixture of the season at home to Staines Town, with five new players as they begin their bid to retain the title.

Two of the newcomers are in the front line where Derek Harris seems favourite for the centre forward shirt alongside Tony Horseman and Geoff Anthony. Dylan Evans must also come into the reckoning.

In midfield, Derek Cotterell, the Loughborough College player, seems set of his league debut with Howard Kennedy and Dave Alexander his likely partners. But with the injured Terry Reardon and Mick Holifield (only just back from holiday) soon bidding for places, competition in this department will be fierce.

It is almost certain there will be two changes from last term's defence. John Delaney will play instead of Alan Phillips while Ray Eaton comes in for Gary Hand at left back.

Mr. Lee revealed this week that 15 of his 17-man squad had either signed contracts or were about to do so. The only players who have not been offered contracts are former Wanderer Paul Fuschillo, a full back and midfielder player Paul Sussons. Both are former professional footballers and both are struggling with old injuries at the present time.

After four pre-season friendlies, one behind closed doors, Wycombe should now have the beginnings of a blend and their final warm-up against Witney promised a good deal for the coming season. Throughout the friendlies, however, there has been an underlying feeling about the lack of goals. Four were scored against Witney but the loss of class players Keith Searle and Steve Perrin, will undoubtedly take some replacing.

Young Harris scored two on Monday but it would be wrong to expect too much of him at this stage. Once again, it looks as though Tony Horseman, in

his 15th year with the club, will be relied upon to find the net — something he has got down to a fine art.

Staines will be playing their first ever match in Division One, after winning promotion and the second division title last season. Having come up from the Spartan League and through the ranks of the Athenians, they are now brimful of confidence.

The Staines team have one or two familiar faces to the Wycombe fans, not the least being Rob Williams, who spent a couple of years at Loakes Park. Rob left two years ago and joined the Middlesex club from Kingstonian. He will play at centre back tomorrow. Forward Gerry O'Rourke was a Dulwich player last season before joining Staines while Brendan O'Sullivan was at Slough last year.

Also in the Staines team is a young full back, Richie Brown. He is the son of Ken Brown, who was the Wanderers goalkeeper for many years in the 50's. Richie used to watch his father at Loakes Park when he was younger and will fulfil a life-long ambition to play there tomorrow.

Staines' friendlies this season have been in the Middlesex Charity Cup. They beat Crystal Palace Reserves, which incidentally included Steve Perrin, 1-0, and then thrashed Feltham 5-0. But against Hampton they went down 0-2.

This season, Wycombe have produced a brand new programme. With a colour picture of the Middlesbrough match last season on the front, the programme is full of information and will sell at 10p.

WYCOMBE Wanderers could be playing in Europe this season. A new idea, developed on the lines of the Barassi Cup which involved the English Amateur Cup winners playing their Italian counterparts in a two leg match has been developed and the Blues have been asked to participate.

Wycombe manager Brian Lee hopes the club will play against Monza, the Italian semi-pro champions, in a two legged cup final. Dates have been arranged for the first match in Italy on September 24 with the return on October 8.

However, Wanderers will not decide whether to enter until they have held a full committee meeting on Monday. The European venture could cost the club up to £1,000 and obviously, they could not afford to make a loss of that size.

Manager Lee said: "I regard this as a real honour for the club. I said all along the League champions should go into Europe but we must cover ourselves against any financial losses. We hope to get some help from sponsorship."

The revival of European competition was started only this month when West Ham decided to revive the Anglo-Italian Cup, last played for in 1971 by Tottenham. The Hammers meet Fiorentina. The Barassi Cup, which fell by the wayside two years ago when Bishop's Stortford decided not to enter, is also being revived with R.I.L. Division Two champions Staines playing Banco Roma at home on October 7 and away on October 25.

Both Wycombe and Staines, however, are concerned with the financial implications. A large crowd at Loakes Park for the home leg will help cover the cost but Wanderers will wait until making a final decision.